

Message Text

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53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SCCT-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 /047 W

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O R 201502Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6399

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BUENOS AIRES 4728

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, AR

SUBJECT: SANTUCHO, OTHER TOP ERP LEADERS ALLEGEDLY KILLED BY
SECURITY FORCES

1. MARIO ROBERTO SANTUCHO AND ENRIQUE GORRIARAN MERLO, RESPECTIVELY THE NUMBER ONE AND TWO TOP LEADERS OF THE OUTLAWED PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY (ERP), WERE ALLEGEDLY KILLED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (JULY 19) IN A JOINT ARMY AND POLICE RAID ON A SUBVERSIVE HIDEOUT NEAR LA PLATA. IN A LATER JOINT OPERATION, ANOTHER FIVE EXTREMISTS, ALSO ALLEGED TO BE ERP LEADERS, WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED. THE INCIDENTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED, ALTHOUGH KEY NEWSMEN TELL US POLICE HAVE PRIVATELY CONFIRMED THE DEATH OF THE TWO SUBVERSIVE LEADERS. THE STORY WAS CARRIED IN MOST BUENOS AIRES NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS AGENCIES, BUT IN THE CONDITIONAL TENSE. THE ONLY INFORMATION IN THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE ISSUED LAST NIGHT WAS THAT AN ARMY CAPTAIN HAD BEEN KILLED DURING THE SHOOTOUT.

2. COMMENT: DEATHS OF SANTUCHO AND MERLO, OPERATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL HEADS OF ERP, WOULD BE A SEVERE BLOW TO THE
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ALREADY HARD-HIT ERP SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, MASSIVE

RETALIATION BORN OF DESPERATION IS A POSSIBILITY IN THE IMMEDIATE
SHORT TERM. STRIPPED OF ITS TOP LEADERSHIP, ERP MAY SPEED UP A
REPORTED MERGER WITH THE STILL FORMIDABLE MONTONEROS, WHO HAVE
APPARENTLY BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN ERP IN RECRUITING NEW
MEMBERS AND AVOIDING HEAVY LOSSES BY ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES.
EVEN SO, SANTUCHO'S DEATH WOULD BE AN ENORMOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL
BOOST TO MILITARY AND POLICE.
CHAPLIN

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